

# BIRD FOOD INVESTIGATION

Leaving out food for garden birds is a great way to help them. Providing a variety of food all year round attracts different types of bird and makes sure they don't go hungry.

Why not have a go at investigating which foods your garden birds prefer.

## You'll need

- 3 different types of bird food.  
Some examples you could use include...
  - ◇ Peanuts
  - ◇ Black sunflower seeds
  - ◇ Sunflower hearts
  - ◇ Fat (perhaps with seeds in)
  - ◇ A raisin feeder
  - ◇ An apple feeder
  - ◇ Mixed seed
  - ◇ Nyger seed
- 3x Bird feeders suitable for holding your foods
- Binoculars
- Pencil and clipboard
- Printed recording sheet
- Stopwatch or other timer



## How to do it:

### Preparation

- Fill up your 3 bird feeders.
- Hang your feeders up outside, this could be from a tree, wall, fence etc. You should make sure that you can easily watch the feeders, but from a distance where you won't disturb the birds (perhaps watching them out of a window etc.).
- If possible leave the feeders for at least couple of weeks before starting the investigation, topping them up if needed. This will allow the birds to get used to them.
- Print out a recording sheet to use.
- Practice using your binoculars. Take care not to look directly at the sun and be careful of any straps.

### Doing the investigation

- Find a spot to watch your feeders, watch the birds without recording for a few minutes to make sure you're not disturbing them with your presence.
- Start the timer and record for 10 minutes.
- Watch the birds, using the binoculars if needed.
- Every time a bird 'visits' a feeder, record its species and what feeder it's on using a tally
  - ◇ A 'visit' counts as a bird landing, eating, then taking off again. If the same bird comes back again, count this as another 'visit'.
  - ◇ Identify species using our Garden Bird Spotter's Guide or other resources.

### Remember

- ◇ Clean your feeders regularly to stop diseases spreading between birds
- ◇ Wash your hands after touching the feeders or food
- ◇ Be aware that allergies such as nuts could be triggered

# BIRD FOOD INVESTIGATION RECORDING SHEET



Bird species	Tally of visits to...		
	Feeder 1 Type of food: _____	Feeder 2 Type of food: _____	Feeder 3 Type of food: _____
Robin			
Blue tit			
Great tit			
Dunnock			
House sparrow			
Blackbird			
Starling			
Green finch			
Gold finch			
Wood pigeon			
Collared dove			
Other <i>write down the species if you know</i>			

# BIRD FOOD INVESTIGATION - RESULTS

How many visits were made in **total**? \_\_\_\_\_

What was the **most popular** type of food? \_\_\_\_\_

What was the **least popular** type of food? \_\_\_\_\_

What **percentage** of all visits were made to each of the 3 types of food?

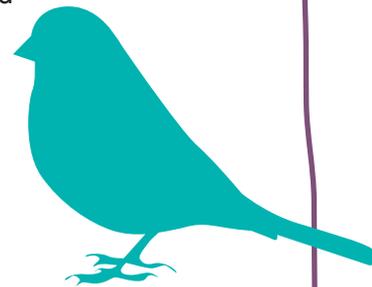
Food 1	Food 2	Food 3
_____	_____	_____

**You could create some graphs to present your results to others? You could try...**

- A graph for each type of food showing how many of each species have visited
- A graph for each species you've seen, showing which type of foods they visited

**Do you think different species of bird prefer different types of food?**

Yes      No



Why do you think this might be?

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## Further investigations

**Try different foods.** Pick another 3 types of food from the list and repeat the investigation with these.

**Does location make a difference?** Repeat the investigation using 3 of the same type of food but in different spots. Do you find that some locations are visited more than others? Why might this be?

**Does time of year make a difference?** Repeat the original investigation at a different time of year. For example compare the results for Spring and Winter. Are there any differences? Why do you think this is?

**Research birds.** Use books or the internet to find out more about your garden birds. Why do you think they eat different foods? What adaptations do they have to these different foods? Why is it important to feed garden birds?

# GARDEN BIRD SPOTTER'S GUIDE



Blue tit



Robin



Wren



Green finch



Starling



Magpie



Male



Female

House sparrow



Jackdaw



Male



Female

Blackbird



Duncock



Collared dove



Wood pigeon



Great tit



Gold finch